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BEHIND THE SOVIET "SHOP WINDOW"

The Kremlin's policy of "transforming nature" in Uzbekistan, Kirgizia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan has always been conducted with an eye to its effect on the Muslim neighbours of those republics, declared the independent Swiss paper "Die Weltwoche" on November 19. But these neighbours were permitted to hear only of the progress achieved and learned nothing of the cost in human sacrifice required to make these projects possible.

They learned, for example, that in 1939 hundreds of thousands of Uzbek peasants had built the Fergana Canal in order to irrigate 120,000 hectares of desert. What they did not hear, said "Die Weltwoche", was that these peasants had been compelled to join this "voluntary" work by the deliberate drying-up of their fields and orchards and an artificially created famine.

Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, had been made the "shop-window" of Soviet Asia and had the second most powerful transmitting station in the Soviet

Union. This praised Soviet culture and technical methods day and night for the benefit of all Asians. Selected Asian visitors were shown impressive streets and buildings but "the Party officials delegated to escort them make sure that they see nothing more than they are intended to see". It did not occur to the visitors, the paper said, that because of the enforced and widespread introduction of cotton cultivation, once independent and self-sufficient countries had reached a state of colonial dependence upon Moscow for the cereals they needed.

In the 60 forced labour camps round Karaganda, in Kazakhstan, "all those caught up in the pitiless wheels of the Soviet Secret Police must now sweat out their days in hard labour in the service of the Soviets". Very few "come out alive from the places where, on Moscow's orders, nature is being 'transformed!'".